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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000445

NOFORN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2019
TAGS: PTER PREL ETRD EWWT IN BG
SUBJECT: INDIA SEES INCREASED INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION WITH
BANGLADESH, BUT STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

REF: A. DHAKA 174
B. DHAKA 425

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Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh said intelligence sharing among the two countries is improving but remains far less than ideal. He told the Ambassador on May 3 the Bangladeshi government report on the February border guard mutiny would likely blame Bangladeshi intelligence agencies for the debacle and not outside forces. The Indian envoy applauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's efforts to regulate Islamic schools not yet under government control and said her administration was grappling with the country's acute energy shortage. The Indian conglomerate Tata remained interested in major coal, gas and fertilizer investments in Bangladesh despite Bangladesh's failure to approve an earlier \$3 billion project.

BANGLADESH AGENCIES COOPERATING MORE WITH INDIA

12. (S/NF) Ambassador Moriarty visited Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty to provide a readout of his meeting a week earlier with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in which security and intelligence sharing were major topics. Chakravarty said Bangladesh intelligence agencies had become more willing to talk to their Indian counterparts under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's new government. He attributed this in part to the November 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai, which had raised concerns that the terrorists had used Bangladesh for logistical support. He said India had received a debriefing from Bangladesh intelligence on interviews with a recently apprehended suspect from Pakistan-based terror group Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT). The High Commissioner said India had yet to receive a report on a second captured suspect but added it might still be too early for a debriefing. Still, Chakravarty said India was not getting cooperation on capturing and apprehending members of Indian domestic terror groups believed to be operating from Bangladesh, particularly the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). He added that the traditionally non-cooperative attitude of the military Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and other Bangladeshi intelligence agencies had yet to fundamentally change.

BORDER GUARD MUTINY

¶13. (C) Chakravarty said he expected the Bangladesh government report on the Bangladesh Rifles border guard mutiny to be released within a few days. Without naming his sources, he said he was told the report would blame intelligence agencies for failing to thwart the mutiny, which left more than 70 people dead, most of whom were army officers seconded to the border force. He said the report would provide no "clinching evidence" of outside forces involvement in the mutiny, as frequently claimed by Hasina and other senior government officials, but would urge further investigation. Chakravarty said the report also would blame recruitment of extremists into the Bangladesh Rifles during the 2001-2006 Bangladesh Nationalist Party government. (Note: Hasina told Ambassador Moriarty she believed terrorists could have entered the force at that time. End note.)

PUSHING THE GOVERNMENT FORWARD ON EDUCATION, ENERGY AND MORE

¶14. (C) The High Commissioner agreed with the Ambassador that Sheikh Hasina's efforts to bring unregulated Islamic schools known as "qawmi" madrassas under government control was a positive development. Chakravarty noted that madrassas in the Indian state of West Bengal teach Hindu as well as Muslim children, a sign that the schools offer a solid secular education in addition to traditional religious classes. "We are mainstreaming madrassas," he said.

¶15. (C) Chakravarty said Sheikh Hasina's energy adviser,

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Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, recently assured him that building up Bangladesh's energy-generating capacity would take time but would make steady progress. The High Commissioner said Indian conglomerate Tata wanted to pursue fertilizer, steel and gas investments when "Bangladesh is ready." He said Tata remained interested despite Bangladesh's failure to approve an earlier \$3 billion investment proposal from the conglomerate.

¶16. (C) The Ambassador and High Commissioner agreed on the importance of helping Bangladesh develop stable civil-military relations. The Ambassador briefed Chakravarty on U.S. Government plans to bring together leading Bangladeshi government, military and political leaders to work on improving that relationship. Chakravarty supported such efforts and suggested discussions include former leaders of the major intelligence agencies.

INDIA TALKS TO THE OPPOSITION

¶17. (C) Chakravarty briefed the Ambassador on his recent meeting with opposition leader Khaleda Zia, who has long been viewed as far less willing to work with India than Hasina. Zia had questioned whether the terrorist threat was as great as Hasina has claimed, noting that the 2001-2006 BNP government had cracked down hard on extremists. The High Commissioner said he had told Zia terrorists still operated in Bangladesh and had assured her India did not blame the BNP for the continuing extremist threat. He said Zia made "all the right noises" about insisting the BNP wanted good relations with India.

CONCLUSION: U.S., INDIA VIEWS LARGEY IN SYNC

¶18. (C) Chakravarty and Ambassador Moriarty found plenty of common ground in supporting Government of Bangladesh efforts

to improve security, to reform madrassa curriculum, and to create a better business environment. So far, Hasina has appeared inclined to give serious consideration to advice from both the U.S. Government and the Indians. Post will maintain regular contact with the Indian High Commission to ensure the missions remain well-informed on the latest developments on issues critical to both countries.

MORIARTY